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XIII. — SOCIAL LIFE.

Ancient Forms of Social Life. — Social units, in the sense of organized tribal or gentile groups, do not exist among the Koryak. The agnatic family is the social unit. We do, however, find certain facts which seem to indicate the incipient formation of social groups exceeding the limits of a large patriarchal family. One such element, as I have stated before, is the relationship through marriage. Families which enter into such relationships thereby assume certain reciprocal material and moral obligations.

In those customs of the Koryak which refer to social relations, two antithetical tendencies are clearly discernible. One of these tendencies, which we might call anti-social, furthers the isolation of family groups of blood-relatives. The other tendency, on the contrary, develops the germs of a broader social organization. This antagonism in the social life of the Koryak was more marked before the advent of the Russians. Natural evolution would undoubtedly have led to an increasing predominance of the social element. Under the influence of the Russians, however, the social structure of the Koryak has degenerated. All antagonism having become obliterated, their present social life is colorless, and an independent development of social forms can no longer be expected.

I shall attempt to reconstruct the ancient social life of the Koryak from traditions as well as from still discernible survivals of the past. Constant wars, not only with other peoples, but between the separate groups of the Koryak themselves, and the ravages of blood-revenge between the families, rendered life insecure. Every stranger was regarded as a possible enemy. If an unknown man appeared in the settlement or the camp, he was at once asked where he came from, his weapons were inspected, and he was forced into a contest in order that his strength and agility might be ascertained. Then only was he admitted to the house. I was told of an ancient Koryak brave who, before attacking a man, would appear before him in disguise, in a miserable condition, his clothes in rags, and carrying a poor bow. In the ensuing contest he would defend himself but feebly, trying meanwhile to find out the strength of his adversary. During the contests at feasts, the warriors of the various settlements would carefully note each other's strength and methods, in order to profit by the knowledge thus obtained when real feuds would arise.

The attitude towards an outsider as an enemy or ill-wisher found expression not only in the fear of physical injury, but also in the fear of the evil

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In Kuel the only season when fire, as well as the drum, cannot be taken to another house, is the winter, obviously for the reason that the fire and the drum as family protectors are most needed in winter, when the kalau most frequently visit human habitations. The Reindeer Koryak on the Tʻlqai have abandoned all taboos referring to the fire and to the drum. The Reindeer Koryak on the Palpal have no interdict against taking the drum to another house; the fire, however, they allow to be carried to the houses of relatives only. On the Taigonos, ordinary fire may be taken to another house, but not the sacred fire obtained by drilling.

The skin boat, in all non-Russianized villages, still forms part of the family cult, and it can belong to but one family.[1] The sacrificial grass and the alder-branches which are hung on the frame of the skin boat when it is put away for the winter, must not be taken to another house.[2] In spring, when the seal-skin cover is again put on the boat-frame, and the skin boat is made ready for the sea, the possessor of the boat burns the sacrificial grass and the branches at his hearth.

Russian influence has, on the other hand, also hampered the development of some social factors, or has given them a new direction. Owing to increased security, the tendency to form unions between settlements, camps, and other groups, for the purpose of protection against enemies, has disappeared.

In the concluding chapter I shall give a short history of the conquest and final subjection of the Koryak by the Russians. Here I will speak of the present social standing of the so-called "elders" (Russian, starosta [старостa]). The obligations of the non-Russianized Koryak to the Russian Administration consist in the payment of a tribute called yasak, and in free transportation given by them to Russian officials. Mail also used to be carried without pay, but recently the Government has fixed a fee for its transportation. To enforce the duties imposed on the natives, men responsible for them had to be appointed. For this purpose the Koryak were divided into "clans" (Russian, roʻdy [роды, *sing.* родъ]).[3] These were purely territorial groups, lacking the ties of common origin; and the name "clans" given to them is quite artificial. For instance, some settlement of the Maritime Koryak, or a group of Reindeer Koryak camping within the limits of a certain locality, were called clans. At the present time these clans have ceased to be even territorial groups; for, since the lists of families belonging to this or that group were first compiled, many families have moved to another settlement or migrated to another locality. The officials mistook the loose social structure of the Koryak for a fully developed social organization, like that of other Siberian peoples (the Yakut or Tungus, for instance), whose elders were elected by the members of the clan or occupied hereditary positions. The territorial groups of the

[1] See Part I, p. 41; p. 747. [2] See Part I, p. 78; and Plate VII, Fig. 1, opp. p. 80. [3] See pp. 433–443

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224 found side by side with the communistic principle, but that at the present time the principle of work has become predominant. As I have said before,[1] not all among the Maritime Koryak are owners of skin boats. For the hunting of sea-animals in boats, many men are required, and the owners of boats are eager to accept the services of those who do not own any. The relations of these helpers to the owner of the boat are not those of hirelings and master, but of associates with equal rights. The catch is divided into equal parts. In order to obtain more men for his boat, the owner at times takes for himself less than his just share. The participants in his chase, on their part, contribute their own harpoons, and supply the owner with thongs and skins for repairing the boat. When fish and seals are caught with nets, the owners of the latter form groups of several families at each net, among whom the haul of the net is equitably divided. Some individuals prefer to hunt and fish by themselves. Needed assistance is offered mostly to relatives through blood or marriage. Workmen hired for a certain yearly compensation can be found only in the Russianized settlements. Men serving for their brides occupy the position of free workmen; if, however, they have to support aged parents, a share in the products of hunting and fishing is accorded to them. During the exchanges with tradesmen it becomes evident that the hunter's right or ownership is more sharply defined in reference to products of fur-hunting than in reference to objects of consumption. At home the hunter deals with the skins of the fur-animals he has killed more independently than does the fisherman with the fish he has caught, exchanging them frequently for articles he personally needs.

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463 The position of herdsmen among reindeer-owners is now essentially the same as before;[2] but, if a herdsman lives with his family in a separate tent, the number of reindeer he will receive during the year to kill is often agreed upon in advance.

177 592 596 Russian influence has further manifested itself in the tendency of large families to split up into smaller ones. The Koryak assert that in ancient times the houses were more spacious, and that all relatives, to the number of forty or more individuals, lived together in one dwelling. In houses of the Maritime Koryak I have never seen more than fifteen individuals. Among the Reindeer Koryak I found twenty-five individuals in one tent, thirteen of whom, however, were herdsmen and their families. Besides, the sisters and daughters of the master had married into other families, which is of common occurrence, although in ancient times families related by marriage not infrequently lived together. In this case, however, the elder brother, with his family and herds, had also separated from the group, which in ancient times happened very seldom. But nowadays I have frequently met cousins or brothers

[1] See p. 538.

[2] See p. 766.

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living apart. In connection with the separation of brothers, the custom of minority succession has become established. The mother, the aged father, and the unmarried sisters, remain with the younger brother, who also retains the house, all family protectors and amulets, and the boat. The reindeer of the remaining members of the family are under his general supervision.

VENDETTA. — Blood-revenge does not seem to occur at present. This is one of the late results of Russian influence, for the archives record cases of blood-vengeance reported by district officials to the Province Administration up to very recent times. The disappearance of this custom, however, must be ascribed solely to the cultural influence of Russian manners, and not to the stringency of the Russian laws.

The Administration is powerless to enforce respect for the Russian laws in the desolate tundras. In distant localities beyond the easy reach of Russian settlers, murders in the name of revenge for blood or insult probably still continue to occur.

With the Koryak, as with all primitive peoples, the practice of taking blood-revenge has arisen as a re-action to lawless violence. Within certain limits this object has been attained; but no sooner did one murder occurred than it would be followed by an entire series of other murders, and the feud between two family groups would not infrequently be kept alive through several generations.

The duty of avenging the murder of a relative fell upon the male members of the consanguineous group. According to the accounts of the Koryak, the immediate avengers were the brothers; then followed cousins, nephews, and the more remote relatives on the father's or mother's side. In case there were no brothers, the father or uncle, unless impeded by age, would take their place. On the whole, however, vengeance for blood was considered by the Koryak to be the duty of all blood-relatives, and not of single individuals. A consanguineous group consisting of one or several families was also jointly responsible for a murder committed by one of its members, and in so far must be regarded as one juridical personality. We know that the old men often attempted to check the spread of blood-revenge. For this purpose, ransom was resorted to. The Reindeer people would give reindeer to the family of the victim; while the ransom of the Maritime people would consist of skins, embroidered clothes, arms, and other articles.

In one of his reports to the Governor in 1885, the chief of the Gishiga district refers to one case of murder committed at a fair on the Palpal. The relatives of the murderer entered into negotiations with the relatives of the victim in regard to a ransom; but when the latter proved too exacting, the former cut short the negotations, hurriedly broke camp under cover of night, and, accompanied by distant relatives, migrated northward, leaving the family of the victim free to act in accordance with custom. It is further